NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

CONNECTICUT

LAND CLEARING

(Ac.)

CODE 460

DEFINITION

Removing trees, stumps, and other vegetation to achieve a conservation objective.

PURPOSE

Allow needed land use adjustments and improvements in the interest of conservation.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to wooded areas where the removal of trees, stumps, brush, and other vegetation is needed in carrying out a conservation plan.

CRITERIA

Laws and Regulations. All Federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations, including local inland wetland agency regulations, governing the construction and use of this practice as well as setbacks from wells, surface water and property boundaries shall be followed. Planned work shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws and permit conditions and requirements. **The landowner shall obtain all necessary permits prior to construction or any land clearing activities.**

Clearing and disposal methods shall be according to applicable federal, state, and local laws and with due regard to the safety of persons and property.

Clearing shall be done when the soil moisture content is such that soil structural damage or compaction is minimized.

A minimum undisturbed area will be left between the area being cleared and all wetlands, water bodies and perennial streams. The minimum width shall be established by the Connecticut NRCS Practice Standard 391, Riparian Forest Buffer.

Temporary cover will be established as necessary to control sheet and rill and/or wind erosion on the cleared area until the planned land use is in place. Disturbed areas shall be treated to control erosion. All areas disturbed by construction shall be seeded in accordance with the NRCS Conservation Practice Standard 342, Critical Area Planting.

The cleared area shall be left in a condition that will facilitate the planned use and treatment of the land.

Limit pushing the clearing debris into standing or green timber due to increased maintenance issues for re-clearing and the potential of creating a fire hazard. A pile should not be closer than 100 feet (ft) from adjacent woodland, buildings, or roads.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider land clearing when the soil is frozen with minimal snow cover or during a dry summer period to minimize disturbance and movement of topsoil.

Ground disturbing activities associated with this practice have the potential to affect significant cultural resources. Consider using methods that cause the least disturbance to the ground surface.

Land clearing is usually more efficient if the tree is less than 4 inches (in) in diameter. For

larger trees, the root wad or crown should be removed during drier soil conditions. Rough pushing under wet conditions can create deep rutting and can bury debris complicating final cleanup.

If a salvage harvest is made before clearing, leaving taller stumps will facilitate final clearing and grubbing activities.

Special attention should be given to maintaining habitat for fish and wildlife. Strip clearing, windrowing debris, and maintaining den and food trees can minimize impacts on wildlife.

The orientation and layout of berm piles should be considered. Consider chaining or pushing trees down parallel to each other, and to follow topographical contours. The pile should be high, narrow, and compact and free of topsoil and snow. Piles with excess debris do not cure properly. Berms are normally 15 to 25 ft wide by 10 to 15 ft high, and are spaced 150 to 200 ft apart. A break of 30 ft between berms is recommended for every 200 ft of berm length to act as a firebreak, allow natural drainage or runoff, and facilitate equipment.

Land clearing can increase the volume and rate of runoff. This is more pronounced on steeper land.

Consider the steepness of slope when selecting the size and type of equipment needed to clear land.

Consider activities to minimize the spread or introduction of weeds into a newly cleared field.

Consider the disposal of vegetation with regards to carbon sequestration. Burying, composting, or mulching the debris would limit the release of carbon.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose. Plans and specifications shall include construction plans, drawings, job sheets or other similar documents. These documents shall as a minimum, specify the requirements for installing the practice and include the kind, quantity and quality of materials to be used.

The plan shall specify the kinds of timber to be salvaged, lengths of logs, and place of stacking. Method of disposal shall be specified for all material not salvaged.

The plan shall provide for the measures necessary to protect the cleared area from erosion.

To the extent practical, specifications shall conform to NRCS National Engineering Handbook Parts 642 and 643 (Section 20).

AS BUILT DRAWINGS

As built drawings shall be prepared which show all pertinent elements and elevations as actually installed. A copy shall be provided to the owner / operator upon construction completion.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

An Operation and Maintenance (O&M) plan shall be prepared for, reviewed and signed by the landowner or operator.

The following actions shall be carried out to insure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life.

A maintenance program shall be established to maintain vegetative cover while controlling undesired and exotic vegetation.

Watercourses and water quality shall be protected during and after removal of trees and vegetation.

Avoid crossing with heavy equipment when wet.

The use of mechanical treatments, prescribed burning, pesticides or other chemicals shall not compromise the intended purpose.

Select equipment sizes and capacities that will handle the clearing tasks in a timely and economically feasible manner.

Remove non-vegetative debris present or as it surfaces during clearing.